

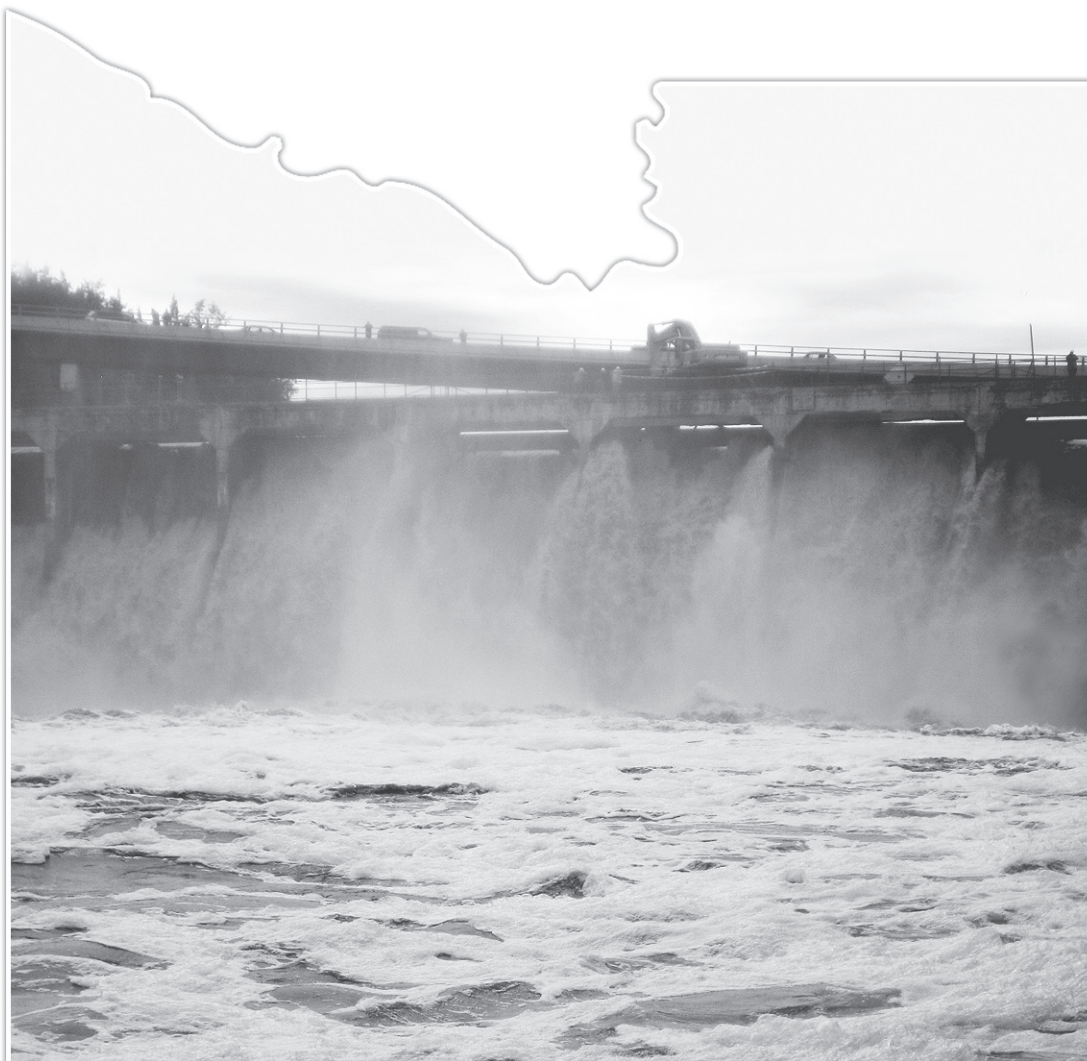


BLUE EARTH COUNTY

COMMUNICATOR

Effectively & Efficiently Delivering Essential Services

FALL ❄️ WINTER 2010



A Milestone Year for Flooding

The Rapidan Dam experienced a milestone year in 2010; it celebrated 100 years and withstood two of the largest three flood events since its construction in 1910. The Dam was carefully operated and monitored by North American Hydro and the County during both the April and September 2010 floods. FEMA has approved funds to repair and reinforce the concrete apron below the dam to resist future floods. The dam generates enough renewable energy to power 2,000 to 3,000 area households. Blue Earth County experienced record-breaking rainfall between 6" and 11" within a short period of time in late September. A record number of roads, bridges and parks were closed because of severe flooding caused by the rain which affected many communities and rural areas throughout the County.

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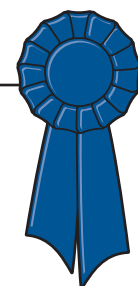
THE COMMUNICATOR

The Blue Earth County Communicator is published biannually to increase public awareness and involvement in county government.



For more information about the publication, or to submit questions and/or comments, contact:

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**Award-Winning
Publication**

by the National
Association of County
Information Officers



The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) presented Blue Earth County with the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for its budget.

The award represents a significant achievement by the County and reflects the commitment of the governing body and staff to meeting the highest principles of governmental budgeting. In order to receive the budget award, Blue Earth County had to satisfy nationally recognized guidelines for effective budget presentation. These guidelines are designed to assess how well an entity's budget serves as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide and communications device.

When a Distinguished Budget Presentation Award is granted to an entity, a Certificate of Recognition for Budget Presentation is also presented to the department designated as being primarily responsible for having achieved the award. Lisa Lyons, Finance Director, was presented the award on behalf of the Blue Earth County Finance Department.

Budget documents must be rated "proficient" in all four categories and meet the fourteen mandatory criteria within those categories to receive the award. For budgets including fiscal period 2009, 1,214 entities received the award. Award recipients have pioneered efforts to improve the quality of budgeting and provide an excellent example for other governments throughout North America.

The Government Finance Officers Association is a nonprofit professional association serving over 17,600 government finance professionals throughout North America. The GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Awards Program is the only national awards program in governmental budgeting.

The Value of Local Government Services

By Katie Nerem, Assistant County Administrator

This fall the Blue Earth County Board adopted a preliminary levy of \$28,577,503 for the coming year. Like many local government jurisdictions across the State, Blue Earth County is applying close scrutiny to the services it provides, outcomes generated by those services, and what the return on investment is to taxpayers. Decreasing revenue streams from the State and a declining tax base creates heightened conversations among policy makers surrounding levels of taxation and the value of government services.

A recent Post Bulletin editorial by Olmsted County CFO, Robert Bendzick, compares local government to the private sector business model of a cooperative or credit union. He states, "People join together and form a co-op to obtain some goods or services that they can't as effectively do on their own." Farmers join a co-op to market their crops or to buy supplies. People looking for specific food offerings at a savings join grocery co-ops. Workers join credit unions for loans and lower interest rates. With a co-op you join by patronizing that business and sometimes by contributing capital to make the business possible. You either compromise with the other members of the co-op on what the co-op will do, or you go to another business for what you want.

When you chose to live in a state or community, you are choosing to join a co-op based on the community's quality of life ideals and priorities. People chose where they live for varying reasons, including types of jobs, quality of schools, and recreational opportunities. Local government provides the framework for those quality of life considerations, and citizens can influence decisions of the co-op on election day or by providing input to their elected representatives.



What does the County do that provides value to you?

When you divide the County's property tax levy by the 61,024 people who live in Blue Earth County, the value of County services for each person becomes more apparent. The total cost of the service, which is often offset by other revenue streams, is provided in parenthesis.

For **\$113.56 (\$115.65)** a year, the County provides a broad continuum of law enforcement services, including a jail and probation officers in an effort to reform people who break the law. This is less than the cost of a home security system.

For **\$74.65 (\$294.51)** a year, we plow and maintain all County roads and bridges for the year, including the entire road that takes you to work or school each day. How much do you pay someone to plow out your driveway?

For **\$22.07 (\$36.56)** a year, we provide assurances that people can't steal your land from you and that someone won't build a factory right next door to your home.

For **\$20.85 (\$21.28)** a year, we ensure people who do break the law are held accountable for their actions through timely prosecution of crime.

For **\$14.63 (\$37.78)** a year, we ensure the approximately 12,000 children living in Blue Earth County are protected from neglect and abuse.

For **\$2.04 (\$8.09)** a year, we ensure your vote is counted at election time while making sure the election process is accessible and legitimate.

For **\$4.46 (\$15.51)** a year, we ensure residents with developmental disabilities are safe, healthy, empowered to work, and can live in our community rather than institutions.

If you total up every service that the County provides, it adds up to \$428.14 per year each person pays through local property taxes. It's County government that makes sure hazardous material isn't contaminating our water supply, and that communicable diseases are tracked and monitored when there is a concern for public health. With the "co-op" model in mind, going together to purchase local government services is a cost effective way to ensure you live in a community that, together, supports similar quality of life ideals and priorities. ■

Stimulus Funds Put to Work on Breckenridge Housing Project

By Jessica Beyer, Public Information Specialist



A computerized rendering illustrates what the Breckenridge Townhomes Project will look like upon completion in fall 2011. Construction will begin within the next few weeks.

Last month, Blue Earth County closed on a major public housing project in Eagle Lake named Breckenridge Townhomes. The project was initiated as the result of a need for more affordable housing combined with the availability of Federal stimulus funding.

Breckenridge will include 18 units consisting of two- and three-bedroom townhomes. Nine of the units are public housing, which means a family that qualifies will pay 30 percent of their gross household income. The remaining 9 units will have fixed rents at \$505 a month for a 2-bedroom and \$550 a month for a 3-bedroom.

The project is geared toward low-income working families and includes a playground and common space to promote a strong community environment.

The \$2,587,700 project was funded with \$276,000 in Blue Earth County Economic Development Authority funds (which are, in part, proceeds from the sale of vacated low-income housing units), \$1,084,000 from HUD and the remainder by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and Greater Minnesota Housing Fund.

The project was designed by Paulsen Architects, and Brennan Construction was awarded the project with an estimated completion date of fall 2011. ■

Remember to Vote Tuesday, November 2, 2010

Where do I go to Vote?

Find your polling location by visiting www.pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us or contacting Blue Earth County Elections at (507) 304-4341. If you haven't registered you can still vote. Visit the Blue Earth County website at www.co.blue-earth.mn.us or contact elections at (507) 304-4341 to find out how.

How Can I Vote Absentee?

You can vote by absentee ballot if you are absent from the precinct, ill or disabled, an election judge serving in another precinct, or unable to go to the polling place due to a religious holiday or beliefs. To obtain an absentee ballot application form visit the Blue Earth County website at www.co.blue-earth.mn.us or call (507) 304-4341. To expedite the process, it is best to vote absentee in person at the Elections office located in the Government Center at 410 S. 5th Street in Mankato. Regular business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The elections office will be open on Saturday, October 30 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. to accommodate absentee ballot voters.

How Can I Find Election Results?

For election results visit the Blue Earth County home page under quick links at www.co.blue-earth.mn.us

Nerem to Serve on Results and Innovation Council

Minnesota State Auditor Rebecca Otto convened the first meeting of the newly formed Council on Local Results and Innovation in September. The eleven-member Council was created, with bipartisan support, during the 2010 legislative session. Blue Earth County Assistant County Administrator, Katie Nerem, was appointed to the Council to represent Minnesota counties.

The Council will establish a standard set of performance measures for cities and a set for counties. The Council is also to serve as a statewide resource for the development, promotion, and implementation of local government performance measurement systems.

"The current culture of government is to talk about outputs and services, when in fact the more important conversation is about outcomes and the return on investment to taxpayers. As a council I am hopeful we will be able to create uniformity surrounding a shift in how government demonstrates its value to constituents," says Nerem.

Statute requires the Council to develop by February 15, 2011, standard sets of approximately ten performance measures for counties and ten for cities aimed at measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of counties and cities in providing services. A county or city that participates in the program will report the results to its residents annually and will also file a report with the State Auditor by July 1.

Participation in the benchmark program will be voluntary for local governments. However, cities and counties that participate in the standard measures program will be eligible for local government aid reimbursements of up to \$25,000 and exemption from certain levy limits.

The Council is soliciting input from the public in developing the performance measurements. All meetings are open to the public with meeting notices posted on the homepage of the Office of the State Auditor website at www.auditor.state.mn.us.

For additional information regarding the Results and Innovation Council contact Blue Earth County Administration at (507) 304-4824.

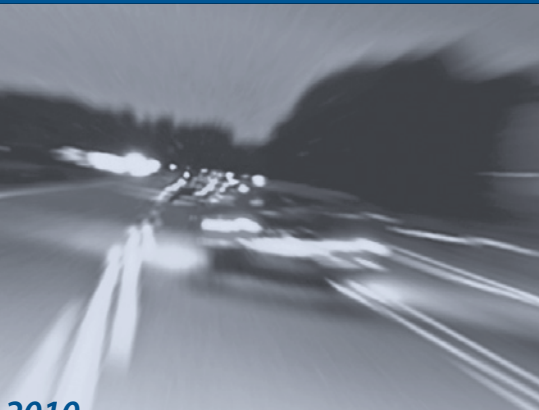


The New Mankato Area Transportation Planning Study (MATAPS) 2035 Plan is Now Online at www.mataps.com

Be sure to check out the new MATAPS update providing a renewed vision for a multi-modal transportation system that improves mobility, enhances quality of life, supports continued economic development, and protects the environment for the area.

MATAPS partners include MnDot/District 7, Region 9 Development Commission, City of Mankato, City of North Mankato, Blue Earth County, Nicollet County, LeSueur County and Minnesota State University, Mankato.

CSAH 12 Extension/TH 14 Interchange Project Update & Timeline



2010

- County State Aid Highway 12 from TH 22 to the Mankato Airport has recently reopened and is currently posted at a 7-ton maximum weight limit until full pavement is in place
- CSAH 3 between TH 22 and CR 86 will open later this fall with a gravel road segment

2011

- Roadway from CSAH 26 south to CSAH 3 will be paved and opened to traffic throughout the summer

2012

- A roadway from CSAH 3 to CSAH 17 (Madison Avenue) and a bridge over TH 14 will be constructed

Red Jacket Trail Trestle Declared Unsafe Trail and Highway 66 at LeSueur River Closed

By Alan Forsberg, County Engineer and Public Works Director

The Red Jacket Trestle Bridge was recently closed because of damage caused by fall flooding on the Le Sueur River. A river pier of the historic trestle was severely damaged, putting the trestle bridge at risk of collapse. The trestle also crosses Highway 66 causing added concern if the structure fell.

Engineers examined the pier using special laser equipment and determined only one-third of the limestone block pier remains in place which supports the trestle. Blue Earth County had hoped that the repair would be an easy fix; however, after analysis with assistance from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, it was determined that the river pier was damaged beyond repair and poses a threat to public safety. The Red Jacket Trestle Bridge will be dismantled and moved off site for safe keeping until funds are obtained to repair the river pier and put the trestle back into place. After the trestle and damaged river pier are removed, the Red Jacket Trail will be detoured down

a ramp to the Red Jacket Trail Park, then cross the Le Sueur River along the Highway 66 Bridge and link to an existing paved path connecting with the Red Jacket Trail past the trestle. The public is reminded to stay away from the Red Jacket Trestle Bridge and the area around the HWY 66 crossing, including the water below. ■



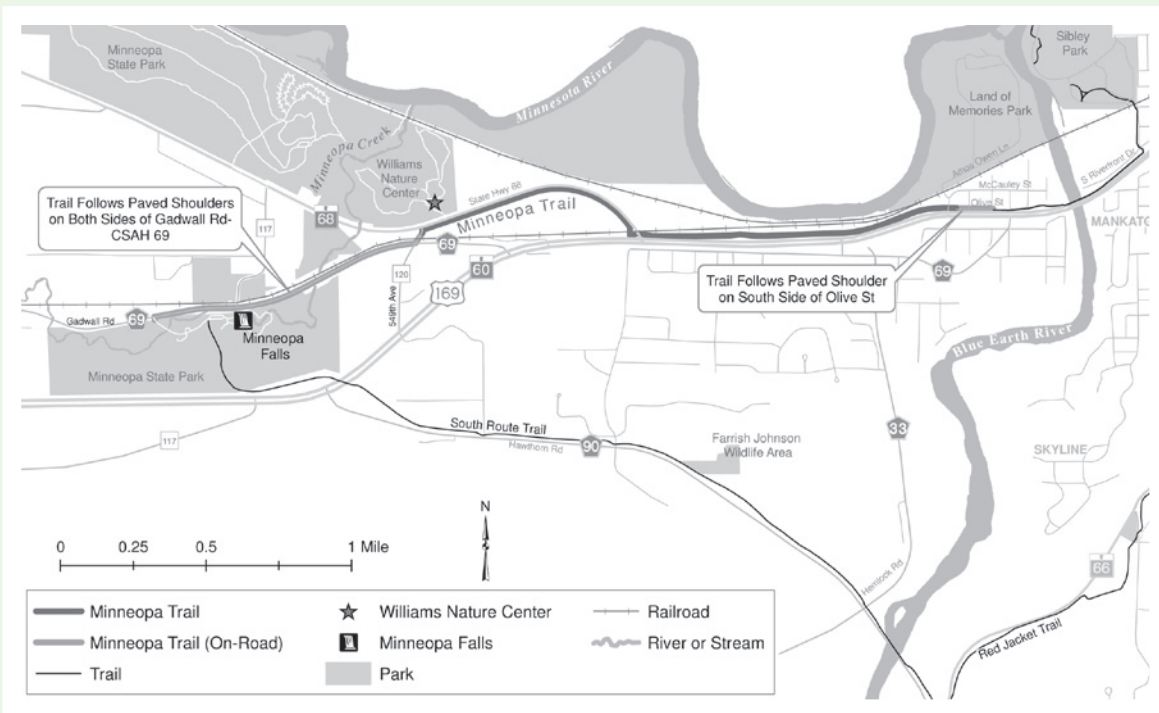
For more information please contact the Blue Earth County Highway Department at (507) 304-4025.

The New Minneopa Trail is Open!

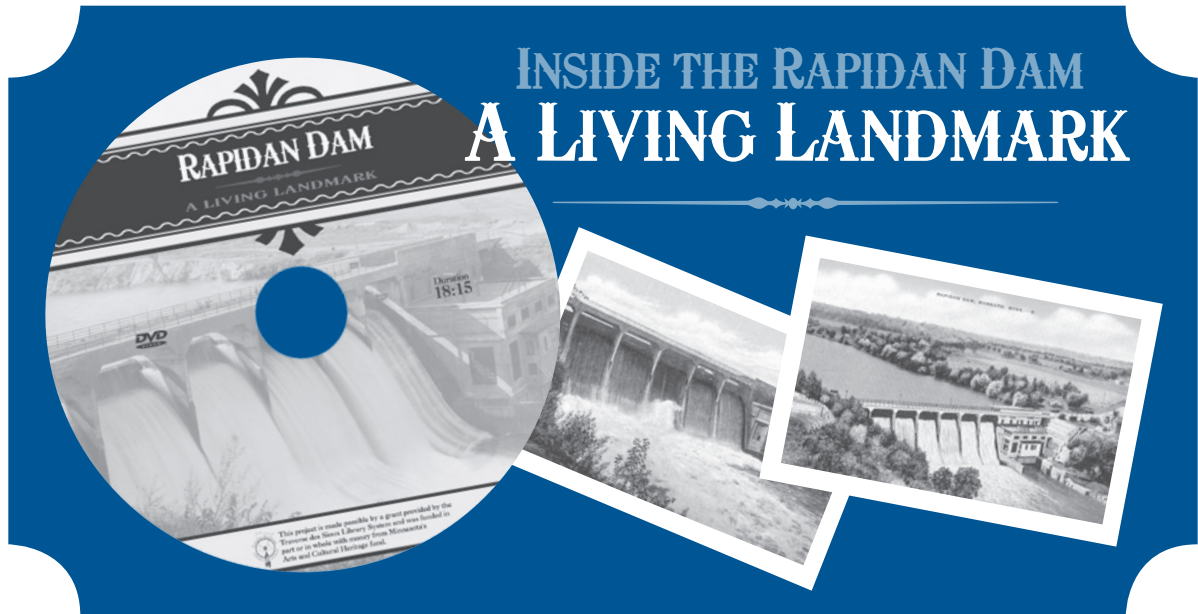
Thank you to all area community members, especially the Greater Mankato Bike & Walk Advocates, who participated and organized a successful grand opening for Blue Earth County's newest trail on Saturday, October 2.

The trail is open and provides a vital link in the area trail system loop which now connects to Minneopa State Park for residents and visitors.

The Minneopa Trail received funding through a cooperative trail grant project with 58 percent from Federal Transportation Funding, 30 percent from Blue Earth County and 8 percent from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The Minnesota Department of Transportation provided 4 percent of project funding, along with technical assistance and most of the right of way the trail is located on.



New Video Highlights 100 Years of the Rapidan Dam



Blue Earth County, along with project partners including the Rapidan Heritage Society, North American Hydro and the Blue Earth County Historical Society, have put together a video titled, "Inside the Rapidan Dam: A Living Landmark." The project was made possible by a grant provided by the Traverse des Sioux Library System and was funded in part or in whole with money from Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

"The video is a great way for the public to learn about the historical significance of the Rapidan Dam, how it shaped industrial development in our area and for people to see how the landmark operates today," stated Blue Earth County Commissioner Will Purvis.

"Inside the Rapidan Dam: A Living Landmark" will serve as a tool to educate several types of audiences on a topic of interest to many locally and across the State. The Rapidan Dam is part of the MN150 exhibit at the Minnesota History Center and is also featured in "Minnesota 150: The People, Places and Things That Shaped Our State" by author Kate Roberts.

Copies of the video will be available in all Blue Earth County libraries, offered for use in area schools and presented through public outreach efforts among project partners. Those interested in purchasing a copy can visit the Rapidan Heritage Society or Blue Earth County Historical Society.

For more information please contact the Blue Earth County Historical Society at (507) 345-5566.

WINTER ACTIVITIES AT BLUE EARTH COUNTY PARKS

ACTIVITIES	PARKS									
	BRAY (102.3 ACRES)	DALY (73.81 ACRES)	DUCK LAKE (31.66 ACRES)	LAKE GEORGE (4.2 ACRES)	RED JACKET TRAIL PARK (4 ACRES)	WILLIAMS NATURE CENTER (65.3 ACRES)	INDIAN LAKE (112.44 ACRES)	SCHIMEK (29.75 ACRES)	WILDWOOD (28.3 ACRES)	LONE PINE (2.3 ACRES)
SNOWSHOEING	•	•			•	•	•	•		•
ICE FISHING	•	•	•	•						•
CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING	•	•			•	•	•	•		

Veteran Services Update

New Presumptive Conditions for Agent Orange Exposure (Viet Nam Veterans)

The U.S. Department of Veterans affairs has established additional disabilities as presumptive conditions resulting from exposure to Agent Orange while serving in Viet Nam. Additional conditions include B cell leukemia (hairy cell leukemia), Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has now finalized the rules regarding developing and rating these disability claims.

Veterans who have served in Viet Nam (in country) and developed these conditions should file disability compensation claims based on their exposure to Agent Orange. Spouses of veterans who served in Viet Nam and whose husbands may have had these conditions and subsequently died as a result of these conditions may also be entitled to survivor's benefits. They should file claims for possible service-connected death benefits.

For assistance in filing compensation claims for these conditions or any other veterans benefits, please contact the Blue Earth County Veterans Service Office at (507) 304-4246.

Minnesota CORE Program

Minnesota CORE program is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota. This program is designed to bring counseling and community-based services to veterans, military members and their families across the state. There is no charge for these services.

These services include:

- Individual, family, and couples counseling
- Deployment and reintegration support
- Budget and debt management counseling
- Anger and stress management
- Resource referral
- Caregiver support and respite services for veterans age 60 and older who may require supportive services to remain in the home.
- Parenting and child social skills training for families.

Information on these services may be obtained by contacting Lutheran Social Services at (888) 881-8261.

Honor Flight for WW II Veterans

World War II veterans have the opportunity to visit the WW II memorial in Washington D.C. at no charge. A one-day trip to visit the memorial via air travel is possible. Private donations and fund raising efforts have made this endeavor possible. However, flights are limited and veterans are encouraged to get their application in to get on the waiting list. Applications can be obtained at the Blue Earth County Veterans Service Office, 410 S. 5th St, Mankato, MN. For more information visit www.semnhonorfliight.org.



Congratulations to the Blue Earth County Drug Court Program on Five Successful Years!

About Blue Earth County Drug Court

Drug Court is a special court that hears selected cases involving non-violent, substance-abusing offenders (both drugs and alcohol). Drug Court programs are rigorous, requiring intensive supervision including frequent drug testing and appearances before the judge, along with a long-term regimen of treatment and recovery services. This level of supervision allows the program to actively support the recovery process and react swiftly to impose sanctions or to reinstate criminal proceedings when participants cannot comply with the program. Drug Court can be used in lieu of jail and/or prison.

The Blue Earth County Drug Court is a community-wide, collaborative effort to reduce crime, increase public safety, lower recidivism and rehabilitate substance-abusing offenders by providing them with multifaceted interventions, frequent court contacts and intensive supervision.

For more information, please contact Kevin Mettler, Drug Court Coordinator at (507) 304-4750.

JOLT Program Helps Students Interested in Corrections

By Josh Milow, Community Corrections Director

Joint Opportunities to Learn and Thrive (JOLT) is a joint venture between the Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU) and the Blue Earth County Community Corrections Department. JOLT serves as a gateway program for students interested in pursuing a career within the field of corrections and is an innovative and collaborative initiative between professionals, students, and juvenile offenders.

JOLT was the product of a brainstorming session during a 2003 strategic planning meeting. Due to increasing workload responsibilities, several agents within the Blue Earth County Probations Department indicated a necessity for trained volunteers to assist in low-risk case load responsibilities. In addition, because of budget cuts to County Human Services, fewer services were available to high-risk juvenile clients. After several departmental discussions and meetings with Minnesota State University, Mankato Sociology/Corrections faculty, JOLT was established.

The program is comprised of two main components: Field Training Mentoring and Mentoring Youth on Probation. JOLT students are assigned to a probation officer or program within the office to complete field training. Students work in drug court, truancy court, diversion, community work service, sentencing to service or may be assigned to an agent for special projects. Students assist in home visits, school visits, tutoring and monitoring conditions. Students participate a minimum of 3 hours a week in case management duties.

The second component of the program is mentoring youth on probation within Blue Earth County. Students work on a case plan with the supervising probation officer to determine goals and possible rewards for the youth. Students do individual activities as well as group activities with the entire JOLT group, MSU faculty and staff of Blue Earth County Probation. Mentoring is designed to consist of three to four hours a week of time between the JOLT student and client. JOLT students are also expected to meet with the supervising agent twice per month to discuss their client.

Current students of MSU are encouraged to apply and most are involved in the corrections program at MSU. Students are admitted to the program after completing an application and competitive interview process. The course begins with a 12-hour orientation conducted by Blue Earth County Corrections staff and a professor from MSU. Students receive training in CSTS, confidentiality, safety training, ethics, boundaries, case planning and other corrections concepts. The students

receive additional training throughout the year and have an opportunity to gain a wide and variable amount of experience prior to completing an internship. Juvenile probation clients have a mentor to work with them for a nine-month period providing pro-social experiences. MSU is able to provide their students with valuable field training that would be otherwise difficult to obtain. And finally, Blue Earth County gets the ability to work with students and train them in the field of corrections while allowing probation officers to be more efficient.

Currently the program is co-facilitated by Michele Schroeder, Blue Earth County Probation Department; Robyn Schauer, Drug Court Agent/JOLT Program Coordinator and Dr. Barbara Carson, MSU. After eight years of service, JOLT has served approximately 90 MSU students and mentored 85 juvenile probationers. The 2010/2011 school year will utilize 19 student participants, the highest number involved to date. JOLT'S success and longevity speaks volumes, especially about the creativity and innovation of the professionals who have committed to and contributed to its success for so many years. ■



(l to r) Dr. Barbara Carson, MSU; Josh Milow, Blue Earth County Corrections Director; Robyn Schauer, Drug Court Agent/JOLT Program Coordinator receiving a recent award for the program. Not pictured; Michele Schroeder, Blue Earth County Probation.



Ponderosa Landfill Expands for the Future

By Dave Kronlokken, Environmental Services Supervisor

Blue Earth County recently completed construction of cell 10 at the Ponderosa Landfill. The new cell is 1.6 acres in size, but will create an additional 200,000 cubic yards of airspace capacity that is estimated to last up to four years or longer depending on the volume of waste received. Cell 10 is the final cell approved under the Ponderosa Landfill's current State permit and has also included an expansion of the landfill's active gas collection system. The landfill has additional room to grow, but further expansion will require approval from the MPCA.

Cell construction is a multi-step process, including earth work, liner placement and pipe-welding according to an engineered design. Construction begins with excavation and shaping of the bowl where the liner will be placed. It is important for



For more information call the 24-Hour Waste and Recycling Hotline at (507) 304-4242.

all sides and the floor to slope to one spot, creating a sump. Next a dense blue clay liner is compacted into place on top of the soil. Two feet of dense blue clay is distributed in four layers. Each six-inch layer is separately compacted and tested for density and moisture. After this process is approved, heavy plastic liner panels are rolled out on top of the clay and welded together into a single sheet. Each welded seam is tested numerous times during this process. Once the plastic liner is in place, it is covered with a drainage system constructed of channels of crushed rock and perforated pipe. A layer of sand one foot thick is added to cover everything. The final stage in cell construction is to use an electronic process to detect if there are any leaks in the plastic liner under the sand. Any leaks found are uncovered, repaired and re-covered with sand.

This careful process ensures that any liquid draining through the waste is captured by the liner and carried through the drainage system to the sump, or low area, where it is pumped out to the leachate ponds for treatment.

The Ponderosa Landfill initially opened in 1972 and was purchased in 1996 by Blue Earth County. It includes over 400 acres of associated property with a disposal area of about 42 acres, 26 of which have been closed. The landfill receives around 30,000 tons of waste per year (over 100 tons per day) from industrial, commercial and residential sources. The landfill is a key component of the County's Integrated Waste Management System which directs nearly all residential waste to a commercial incinerator where it replaces coal as fuel for production of electricity. ■

Changes in Well Water Testing Procedures

By Pete Otterness, Environmental Health Specialist

Changes in well water testing procedures in Blue Earth County have resulted in a new provider and lower cost for tests. As of September 1, 2010 testing will be conducted by Minnesota Valley Testing Laboratories (MVTTL) rather than by County staff. Samples submitted through the Blue Earth County program will now cost \$24, down from \$25.

Containers for collecting the water samples are available at Blue Earth County Environmental Services office in Mankato. Samples must be collected on Mon., Tues. or Wed. and be delivered to the Environmental Services office the same day the sample is taken. Results generally take two weeks to obtain and will be sent directly from MVTTL.

Samples will still be tested for nitrates and coliform bacteria. These are the primary indicators for a potable water supply. Additional testing can be arranged though the County program at an additional cost. ■

For more information on well water testing, contact Pete Otterness, Blue Earth County Environmental Health Specialist, at (507) 304-4381.

Blue Earth County is looking for a few good recyclers who enjoy educating others. Openings exist on the Recycling Education Committee, which operates under the Environmental Services Department.

The Recycling Education Committee is a working committee, which makes recommendations on recycling and waste reduction. The committee is responsible for creating action plans for projects and participating in outreach efforts. For example, members have staffed informational booths at the Mankato Farmers' Market, Blue Earth County Fair and other events.

All applicants must be residents of Blue Earth County and are appointed by the Blue Earth County Board of Commissioners to two-year terms. Anyone interested in applying to the Recycling Education Committee should contact Jean Lundquist, Blue Earth County Recycling Coordinator at (507) 304-4381 or by e-mail at jean.lundquist@co.blue-earth.mn.us. Applications must be received by Friday, November 12, 2010.

Flood Relief Grants Available for Veterans & Families

As a result of severe flooding in southern Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is offering Flood Relief Grants for reimbursable expenses resulting from flood damage to Veterans in 35 Minnesota counties, including Blue Earth County.

Veterans and surviving spouses may be eligible for reimbursement assistance grants of up to \$750 provided they have not received reimbursement from FEMA or personal insurance coverage.

Examples of reimbursable expenses are: appliances, building materials, cleaning supplies, flooring, food, and plastic, plumbing supplies, rental cost for generators, water pumps, sump pumps, shelter costs if displaced by flooding, and sheet rock and window repairs.

Veterans and surviving spouses should contact their County Veterans Service Office for more information or to complete an application if appropriate. The Blue Earth County Veterans Service Office can be contacted at (507) 304-4246. All eligible applications and copies of receipts must be dated between disaster timeframe as designated by the Governor and/or FEMA. Applications must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 2010.

Upcoming Library Events



LIBRARY SERVICES

Live Reindeer at Blue Earth County Libraries

- Friday, December 3
4 to 6 p.m. – Mapleton Library
- Saturday, December 4
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. – Mankato Library
- Friday, December 10
4 to 6 p.m. – Lake Crystal Library

Halvorson Family Band Performance

- Thursday, December 7
6:30 to 7:15 p.m. – Mankato Library
- Music will include a mix of bluegrass, traditional, gospel, Irish and more.

Gator Alley Holiday Puppet Show

- Saturday, December 11
10:30 a.m. – Mankato Library

Cookie Decorating with Mrs. Claus

- Tuesday,
December 21
10:30 a.m. –
Lovelace Wing at
Mankato Library



Library FAQ Spotlight

By Tim Hayes, Library Director

Why am I being charged a new book price for a damaged library book that was used when I borrowed it out from the library?

At the library, we do not consider a book as “used”, rather a title to be shared by all library members. There are books at the library that have been borrowed over 500 times and still are available in good condition for more people to enjoy. When you are charged for a damaged book, you are paying to replace that title in the library.

The library has a limited budget for material purchases, and is unable to cover the cost of materials that are damaged while borrowed by a user. It is the library user’s responsibility to take care of the items they borrow, and replace items that are damaged while in their care. When a person signs up for a library membership, they agree to accept responsibility for all fines incurred and for loss of, or damage to, material borrowed.

The library does not charge a user for normal wear and tear damaged to items that are borrowed. Examples of this would be loose pages and bindings. We only charge a user if the item is damaged to a point where we can no longer place it on our shelves for others to use. Often times there are health hazards involved. Food and liquids spilled on books will grow mold. Stains of dirt and other substances are not things that other people want to touch while reading. Severely torn pages or missing pages also make books unusable. ■



Thank You

to all the generous community sponsors for the 2010 Blue Earth County Library Summer Reading Programs in Mankato, Mapleton and Lake Crystal which allowed 3,318 children to participate.



2010 Key Sponsor:

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CORPORATION
C O M P A N I E S

Contributing Sponsors

Friends of the Deep Valley Libraries
Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund
Traverse des Sioux Library System
Noodles & Company
Chipolte Mexican Grill
Old Country Buffet
Papa Murphy's Pizza
Mankato MoonDogs
WOW! Zone
Experimental Aircraft Association
Karmel Korn/Orange Julius
TY
Pizza Ranch

Assess Home Energy Use!

A program sponsored by Xcel Energy and the Envision 2020 Energy & Conservation Task Force allows adult library card holders to check out portable energy meters to help assess home or business electricity use. The meters are easy to use and can be plugged into any standard 120-volt electric appliance to measure voltage, electricity cost and electric consumption. Visit any Blue Earth County Library in Mankato, Mapleton or Lake Crystal to take advantage of this unique program.



Experience the Adventure of 4-H

By Amanda Sommers, 4-H Program Coordinator

Blue Earth County families and youth are invited to discover the exciting things happening in 4-H today! Youth in kindergarten through one year past high school (whether they live in town or the country) can participate in short-term activities or longer-term clubs, where groups meet regularly to work on projects, perform community service and develop leadership and life-long learning skills. ■



Amanda Sommers, Blue Earth County 4-H Coordinator helps youth in the 4-H Adventures Program with their projects during an educational session held at the Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse.

To learn more about 4-H and the programs available in Blue Earth County contact Amanda Sommers at (507) 304-4325 or eppe0018@umn.edu.

Upcoming 4-H Adventures

Mini blasts of educational fun – learn something in just a few short hours

November 9	Pennies, Pennies, Pennies
December 7	Winter Weather Wonderland
January 6	Insect Invasion Adventure
February 8	Paper Bag Party
March 28	Super, Spectacular Science
April 12	Top Secret Adventure

4-H Adventures are held at the Historic Courthouse in Mankato from 5 to 6 p.m. and carry a minimal cost.

Pre-registration is required, so please call (507) 304-4325 or email eppe0018@umn.edu to get signed up!



Interested in Learning More About County Government & Getting Involved?

Apply for the 2011 Blue Earth County Citizens Academy!

Get an inside look at county functions through five hands-on sessions with facility tours and the opportunity to meet the people behind the services on selected Tuesday evenings in March and April 2011.

To learn more contact Jessica Beyer at (507) 304-4491 or by e-mail at jessica.beyer@co.blue-earth.mn.us

Protect Your Home Against Property Fraud

What is property fraud?

When someone illegally uses your property for financial gain.

How does it happen?

Someone records a fraudulent document in the county land records office making it look like they own your property.

Should I be concerned?

Yes. According to the FBI, property and mortgage fraud is the fastest growing white-collar crime.

What can I do about it?

Your county land records office has teamed up to create a notification service called **Property Fraud Alert**.

You can subscribe to **Property Fraud Alert** free of charge at www.propertyfraudallert.com/blueearthmn or contact the **Property Fraud Alert Line** at 1(800) 728-3858.

Or for further details contact the Blue Earth County Taxpayer Services Office at (507) 304-4251.

**Be Informed. Be Alert.
Be Notified.**

QuickStart Disaster Recovery Funds Available for Property Owners



Homeowners throughout a 16-county area in South-central Minnesota may be eligible to receive assistance through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency QuickStart Disaster Recovery Program to help with damages associated to the September 22 and 23 flood. The program provides assistance as a last resort when private insurance and federal assistance are not adequate to return a damaged home to its pre-disaster condition. Loans can also pay for work already done if receipts and documentation is provided.

QuickStart is a deferred, no-interest loan from a minimum of \$1,000 to a maximum of \$30,000 per house. The loan must be used for capital improvements to return a house to its pre-disaster or comparable condition, to replace an owner's home destroyed as a result of the disaster, or to repair (not replace) a 1 to 4 unit rental property. No principal or interest payments are made during the term of the loan and the loan will be forgiven in 10 years as long as the home is the primary residence of the borrower. The loan principal must be repaid only if the borrower sells the house or no longer uses it as a primary residence within the 10 year loan period.

Funds available will be distributed on a first come, first serve basis. Prior to contacting MVAC, homeowners need to check with their insurance agency first and then apply for Small Business Administration (SBA) assistance at www.sba.gov. After completing those two steps, homeowners may contact the Minnesota Valley Action Council to apply for a QuickStart loan. The SBA application deadline is December 14, 2010 and the QuickStart deadline is February 14, 2011. Applicants need to be aware that depending on the date they apply for SBA, they have two months from that date to apply for the QuickStart Program.

In addition to the QuickStart loan program, MVAC also offers other options that can assist homeowners with their flood-related repairs, including furnace replacement.

For more information please contact MVAC at (507) 345-6822 or visit www.mnvac.org.



*The easy to use information line and
phone tree details all services offered.*

MAIN LINE: (507) 304-4222

SERVICES	
Financial Assistance	(507) 304-4335
Social Services	(507) 304-4319
Community Health	(507) 304-4319
Mental Health Center	(507) 304-4319
Child Protection/Intake	(507) 304-4444
Child Support	(507) 304-4166

Human Services (507) 304-4222



Get Involved on an Advisory Committee or Task Force!

Blue Earth County Human Services is looking for applicants for the Human Services Advisory Committee and Task Forces appointed by and advisory to the Blue Earth County Commissioners. This committee is authorized by law to fulfill specific responsibilities in relation to a County's operation of its Human Services programs. The purpose of the committee is to provide input to the County Board relating to service developments, priorities, budgeting and evaluation within the Human Services Department. This includes the program areas of mental health, community health, social services and financial assistance.

For more information or to apply to serve on an advisory committee or task force contact Noelle Bruender at (507) 304-4064 or by e-mail at noelle.bruender@co.blue-earth.mn.us

South Central Crisis Center Reopens

By Angela Youngerberg, SCCBI Program Manager

The South Central Crisis Center reopened its doors in early August through new operation under Horizon Homes, Inc., a well-established local provider of adult mental health services. Services include housing, treatment and rehabilitation options. The reopening of the crisis center is possible because of the partnership between Horizon Homes, Inc., the South Central Community-based Initiative (comprised of 10 South Central Minnesota counties) and the Department of Human Services.

The Crisis Center has historically been operated by the State of Minnesota's Department of Human Services (State Operated Services), but funding shortages resulted in the closure of this facility earlier this spring. The former South Central Crisis Center offered short-term residential crisis beds, outpatient crisis stabilization, and psychiatric urgent care services for adults with mental illness. Having served 888 individuals in 2009 out of the 521 Pfau Street location in Mankato, the loss of such a facility would have a devastating impact on people living with mental illness in the region. The result would have been an increase in more intensive interventions, such as emergency department and hospital care, and law enforcement intervention.

To learn more about services at the Crisis Center, call (507) 344-0621. For more information on the South Centra. Community-based Initiative visit www.sccbi.info.

Upon announcement of the facility closure this spring, regional human service agencies worked together to advocate that the services would eventually reopen and remain available for those experiencing a mental health crisis. Through legislative action, limited funding was secured to preserve these services. The funding, allowed the regional partners an opportunity to create a redesigned crisis service model. Adjustments such as moving psychiatric urgent care from the Crisis Center to other locations, the addition of a mobile crisis team and 24/7 crisis phone line, and changes in staffing patterns will allow for the capture of insurance funding to support this model of crisis services with less dependence on state and local funds.

The South Central Crisis Center/Horizon Homes, Inc. provides a 12-bed short term crisis unit, outpatient crisis stabilization services, a crisis line, and a mobile crisis response team. Services at the crisis center are available to any adult experiencing a mental health crisis. The mobile crisis response team is available from 4 p.m. to 12 a.m. daily and will travel up to 30 miles from the Mankato facility. ■

Consider Becoming a Foster Family and Make a Difference

Foster parenting is a commitment to help a child and their family through a particularly difficult period by providing a safe and stable home while their own family is not able to. It is a rewarding way for people who are genuinely concerned about the well-being of children to support and strengthen families in our community.



Children and youth may need foster care for a variety of reasons. Foster parents are prepared to help children with emotional, behavioral, and educational needs. Sometime the child needs a short term emergency home and other times an extended stay in foster care. On occasion a teen may need a family until they ready to go out on their own. Sometimes foster parenting has resulted in adoption but most often families are reunited as soon as possible.

Foster care families are needed in Blue Earth County for children of all ages. Teenagers and siblings with three or more children often have a difficult time finding available foster homes. Foster parents provide the daily basics of food, clothing, shelter and the love, stability guidance and discipline that all children need. Foster parents are not paid for their service, but do receive a monthly reimbursement that covers room, board, clothing and other essential expenses including medical and dental expenses for the children and youth.

To learn more about the Blue Earth County Foster Care Program please contact Joanna Petersen with Blue Earth County Human Services at (507) 304-4167.

Write Now!

Write & Tell Us What You Think.

The Blue Earth County Board of Commissioners and other officials are committed to providing quality service to our residents. Responding to your concerns and needs is a priority.

Please fill out the information below and leave it with a receptionist at any County office, or mail it at your convenience to:

Blue Earth County Public Information
P.O. Box 8608
Mankato, MN 56002-8608
or e-mail info@co.blue-earth.mn.us

With which County department did you have contact?

Please Evaluate: Excellent Good Poor

Courtesy of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timeliness of service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value of service provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I would like County officials to know:

I have a suggestion:

If you want us to respond to your comments:

Name:

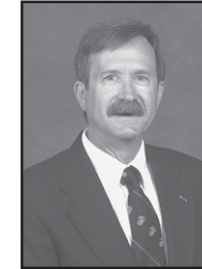
Address:

Daytime Phone:

**Thank you for your feedback.
We appreciate your comments so
we can serve you better!**



Drew Campbell
District 1 Commissioner
P. O. Box 1283
Mankato, MN 56002-1283
387-2408 (H) / 304-4282 (O)
drew.campbell@co.blue-earth.mn.us



Tom McLaughlin
District 2 Commissioner
344 Inverness Drive
Mankato, MN 56001
388-7647 (H) / 304-4283 (O)
tc_mclaughlin@hotmail.com



Mark Piepho
District 3 Commissioner
8 Skyline Drive
Mankato, MN 56001
345-4380 (H) / 304-4368 (O)
mark.piepho@co.blue-earth.mn.us



**Will Purvis,
Chair**
District 4 Commissioner
52298 140th Lane
Vernon Center, MN 56090
549-3420 (H) / 317-5465 (C)
will.purvis@co.blue-earth.mn.us



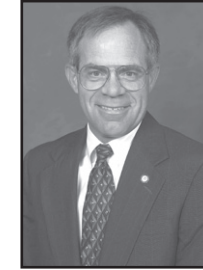
**Kip Bruender,
Vice Chair**
District 5 Commissioner
204 Joan Lane
Eagle Lake, MN 56024
257-2116 (H) / 382-2440 (C)
kip.bruender@co.blue-earth.mn.us



Brad Peterson, Sheriff
Blue Earth County Justice Center
401 Carver Rd.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4800
brad.peterson@co.blue-earth.mn.us



**Ross Arneson,
County Attorney**
Blue Earth County Justice Center
401 Carver Rd.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4600



**Dennis McCoy,
County Administrator**
Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse
204 S. Fifth St.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4235
dennis.mccoy@co.blue-earth.mn.us

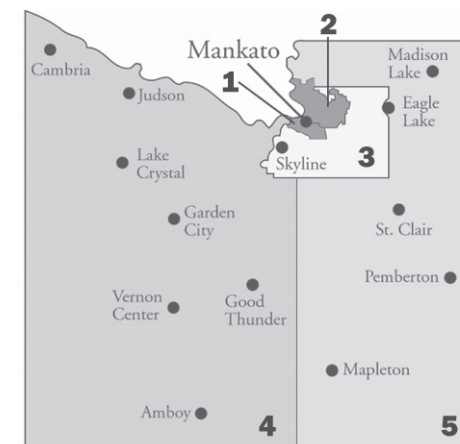
Board Information

The Blue Earth County Board generally meets every other Tuesday in the Boardroom at the Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse, 204 South Fifth Street, Mankato. For specific dates and times visit:

www.co.blue-earth.mn.us/board/schedule.php

Citizens who wish to address the Board of Commissioners at a meeting must contact the County Administrator at 304-4284 before noon Thursday preceding the Board meeting. This is needed to manage the Board's schedule. The Board will not take action at the time of the presentation, but will direct County staff to respond appropriately to issues raised by citizens.

Blue Earth County COMMISSIONER DISTRICTS



SERVICE DIRECTORY



**Blue Earth County
Justice Center**
401 Carver Rd., Mankato



**Blue Earth County
Historic Courthouse**
204 S. Fifth St., Mankato



**County
Government Center**
410 S. Fifth St., Mankato

**Probation
1st Floor 304-4750**

Restitution/Restorative justice
Adult & juvenile probation, Parole, Supervised
release and Diversion
Pre-trial services/Bail evaluation
Community work service programs

County Sheriff /Emergency Services

1st Floor 304-4800

Burning Permits
Civil Process Office
Request a Crime Report
Report a Crime

5th Judicial District Court

2nd Floor 304-4650

Traffic tickets
Small claims court
Civil and criminal court

County Attorney

2nd Floor 304-4600



**Public Works
Department**
35 Map Dr., Mankato

Roads & Bridges 304-4025

Road/bridge construction & inspection
Permits: Driveway, overweight/size loads, utility
Culvert Sales
Swing-away Mailbox Mounts
Calcium chloride for dust control
Park & Trail System 304-4025
Camping & shelter reservations
Firewood sales & boat rental
Agricultural Inspection 304-4025
Weed control & seed testing

**Physical Plant/Safety
Lower Level 304-4249**

Finance

Lower Level 304-4182

**Taxpayer Services – Property Information/
Passports**

1st Floor 304-4251

Property assessment & tax collection
Abstracts/Certificates for registered land
Mapping
Ditch Management
Passports

Administration

2nd Floor

Administration 304-4284
Human Resources 304-4288
Public Information 304-4491

U of M Extension

3rd Floor 304-4325

Agriculture 304-4143
4-H/youth development 304-4142
Horticulture 304-4146
Misc. Program Areas 304-4326
Nutrition Education Program 304-4141



**Blue Earth County
Library**
100 E. Main St., Mankato

General Services 304-4001
Children's Services 304-4020
Adult & Reference Services 304-4022
Fines & Renewals 304-4010
Meeting Room Reservations 304-4002
Bookmobile 304-4004
Administration 304-4002

**Taxpayer Services – License Center/Elections
Lower Level 304-4340**

Driver's licenses
Motor vehicle/Boat registration
Fishing/Hunting licenses
Birth/Death certificates
Marriage licenses
Voter registration/Absentee ballots
Filing of notaries

Veterans Services

Lower Level 304-4246

Federal & State benefits
Transportation to VA Hospital

Information Technology

Lower Level 304-4204

Human Services

1st/2nd/3rd Floors

Main Line 304-4222
Financial Assistance 304-4335
Social Services 304-4319
Community Health 304-4319
Mental Health Center 304-4319
Child Protection/Intake 304-4444
Child Support 304-4166

Environmental Services

3rd Floor 304-4381

Planning & Zoning
Building & Feedlot Permits
Shorelands/Flood plains
Water wells/Septic systems/Wetlands
Recycling Center/Compost Site/Landfill
Household Hazardous Waste Center
911/Rural Addressing

Serving Citizens Through County Government

Other County Facilities/Numbers

Household Hazardous Waste Facility
651 Summit Ave., Mankato, 304-4242

Ponderosa Landfill
20028 Gooseberry Lane, Mankato, 625-7301

Recycling Center
741 Waseca Ave., LeHillier, 345-4255

24-Hour Waste and Recycling Hotline, 304-4242
County TTY/TDD (Hearing Impaired), 304-4399



**BLUE EARTH
COUNTY**

visit us online:
www.co.blue-earth.mn.us